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A school board must operate in such a way that it can cope with the increasingly larger size, complex organization, and sophisticated programs of schools. The relationships among the community, board, and school can be viewed as component parts of a system. Formal and informal lines of communication exist among these parts--between the community and the board in the form of elections, reports, tax levies, and the like; between the community and the school through the board; and between the board and the school through the administrative staff. Each part has its function in the organization. The board sets objectives for the system. The board and administrative staff sets budgets, formulate policies, and make rules. All levels are involved in the evaluation of the school programs. The board must develop two kinds of objectives for the school system--general (a philosophy of education) and operational (specification of the general objectives). The board has the responsibility for decisions to meet these objectives. In this area the board's role includes policy making, rules, budgets, maintaining consistency with administrative decisions, and evaluation of programs on the basis of administrative reports. (HW)

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A Model for School Board Operation*

(September 1, 1968)

I. Introduction

The history of school board operation in Ontario is one of change. It is change from small isolated school systems to large and complex ones, change from single schools administered by board members themselves to large school systems directed by the board but administered by professional educators, change from concern with relatively simple problems of training rural children to take their places on the farms to the complicated problems of preparing youngsters from a variety of backgrounds for a future whose dimensions are not yet known.

The reorganization of school jurisdictions in Ontario along county and regional lines fits this pattern of change. It is a move toward large size, toward more complex organization and toward more sophisticated programs which it is hoped will better prepare children for tomorrow's world.

It follows from these observations that the school board itself must operate in such a way that it can cope with the larger size, the complex organization and the sophisticated programs. It is the effective operation of school boards in such a situation which is of concern here.

It should be emphasized right at the beginning that the principles disucssed here relate to an ideal situation. Very likely, no school board in Ontario or in North America could operate precisely according to these principles because they are not stated in a way which can account for facters

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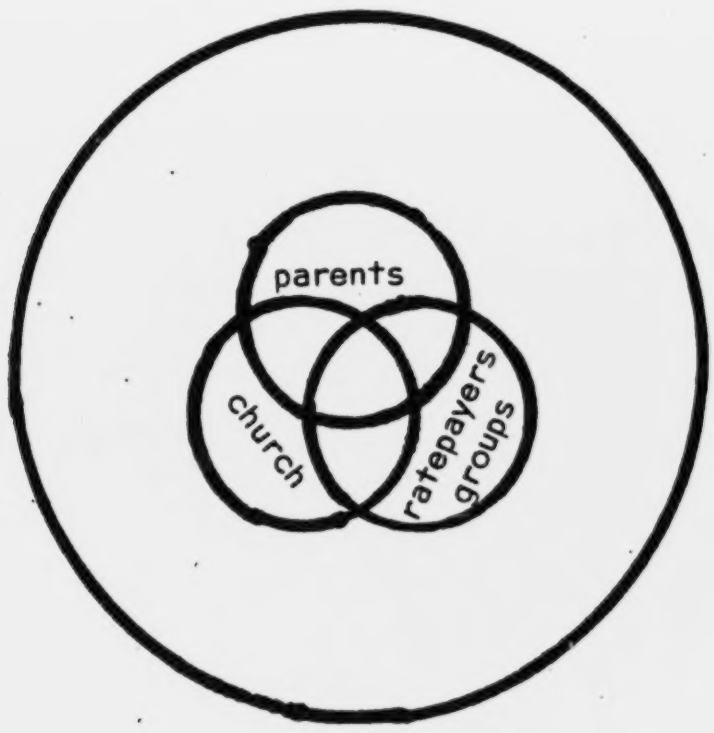
peculiar to individual districts. Rather, these are guidelines of a practical nature which school boards may wish to use to improve their operation or parts of their operation.

II. The Model

School Board and schools do not operate in isolation. They are affected by the community and vice versa. In order to illustrate these relationships and how a board copes with problems arising from the relationships, we shall think of community, board and schools as component parts of a system. A system, or model for our purposes, is simply an ordering of relationships between parts.

The Community. The community is one component part or sub-system. Within the community are various sub-groupings with relationships among themselves. These sub-groupings may consist of parents, the business community, labour groups, political parties and many others. There are, of course, overlapping memberships among these groups.



other groups:

business groups
labor groups
political parties
fraternal organizations
government agencies

FIGURE 1. THE COMMUNITY

The influence of these groups on school affairs varies with the particular issue at stake. Thus, the ratepayers may be very influential on matters of finance while the church group may be influential on matters of religious instruction.

The sum total of the attitudes of these groups toward education constitutes the community influence on education. It is easy to see here that such an influence is varied and complex, as varied and complex as the number of groups. To the extent that there is agreement among groups, the influence and pressure on schools will be strong. To the extent that community groups do not agree on educational matters, the influence will be diffuse.

The School System. In the same way that the community is composed of many smaller component parts, so is the school system composed of many smaller parts. These include various schools within the system, the local teacher federations, staff groups, non-teaching unions, and in some systems, the students. All of these groups interacting together exert influence on the school board.

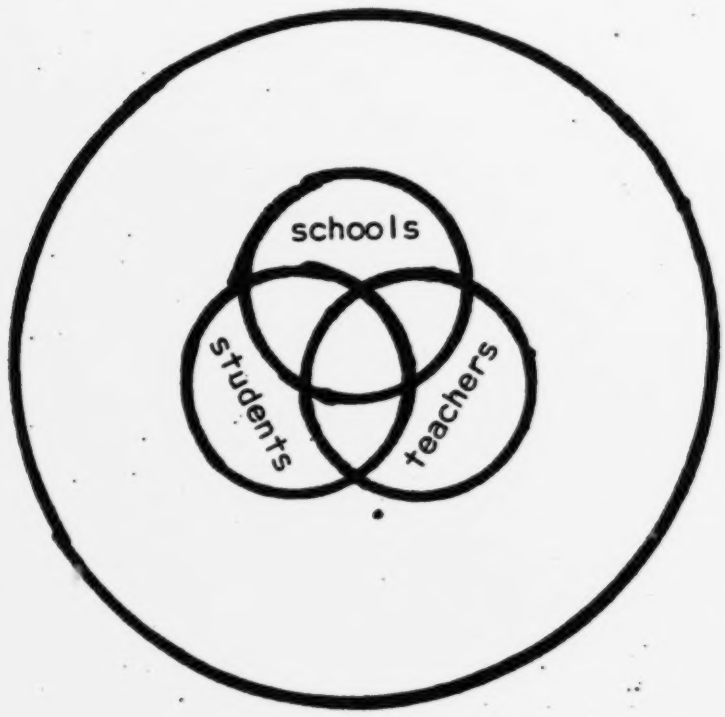


FIGURE 2. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Board. The third unit of our system is the board. The board sits midway between the community and the school in one sense and thus acts as a kind of buffer between the two.

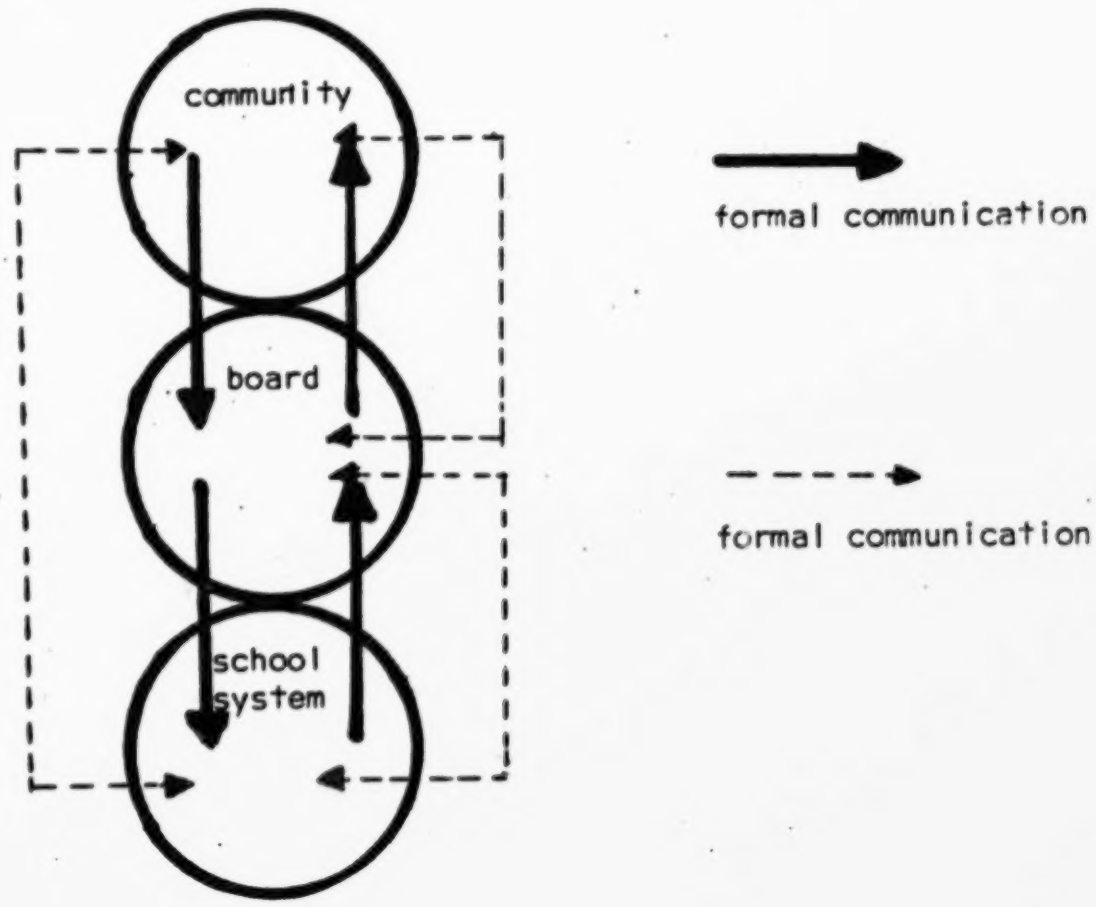


FIGURE 3. RELATIONSHIP OF BOARD TO COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEM.

The board interacts, formally and informally, with the community; it formulates policies and initiates certain decisions; and it interacts with the school system, seeking to have policy implemented in the form of educational facilities and programs.

A more accurate general portrayal would have the school system and the board imbedded within the community, surrounded by it in a sense. This concept permits us to see that the lines of communication from the community to the board and school run informally in all directions, although the formal relationships of the community to the school are only through the school board.

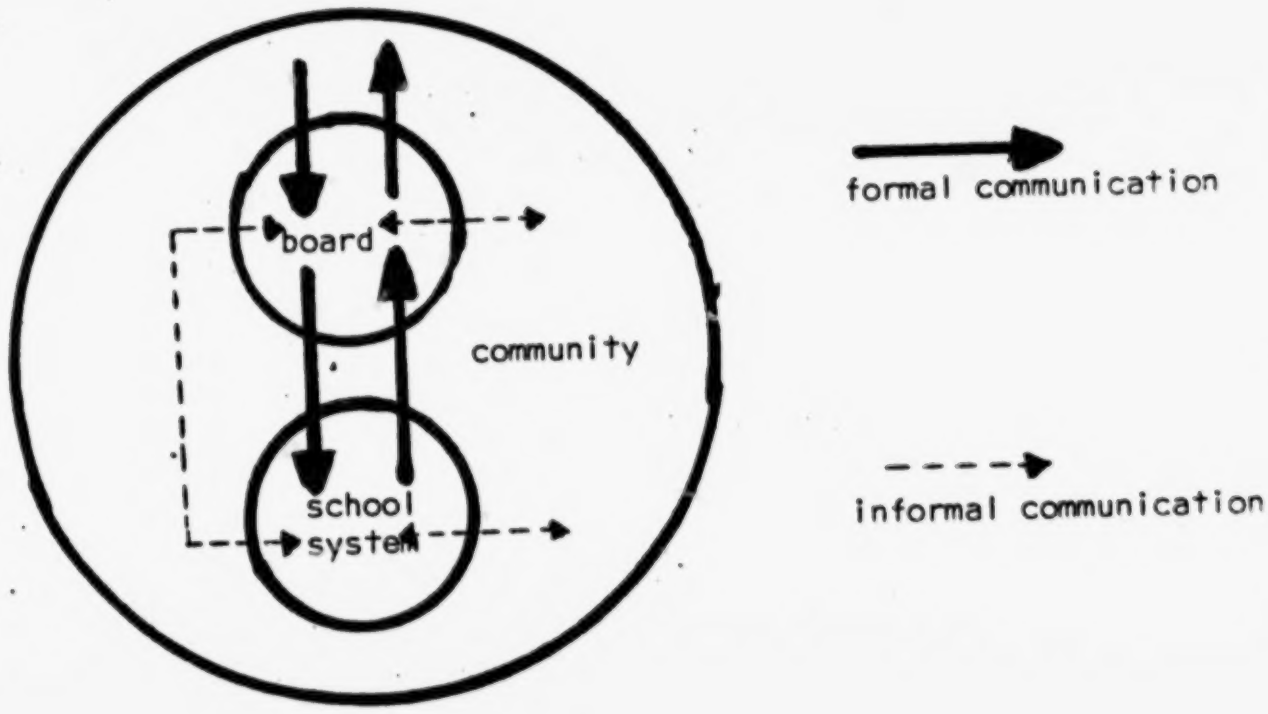


FIGURE 4: RELATIONSHIP OF BOARD TO COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEM.

In the reorganized districts, where the influence of the Provincial Department of Education will be less than it was previously, the sense of community influence on the school, formal and informal, will be increased.

As a system independent of the community and the school district, the board has internal problems of its own. These have to do with organizing itself for effective operation, reducing interpersonal conflict and adapting to changes imposed from outside. In addition, the board has relationships with the community. It sends and receives information from the community in the form of petitions, reports, the election of members, tax levies and in many other ways. Finally, the board has both formal and informal relationships with the school system itself. In the days of Egerton Ryerson, this relationship included the interviewing and hiring of teachers and the purchase of wood for the pot-bellied stove. In a complex society, however, the formal

relationship of the board to the school is through its professional administrative staff rather than directly. Trustees still have plenty of informal direct relationships with the school, however. Their children attend school, they know some teachers personally, they attend school functions.

III. Board-Official Relationships

The problem of the role of officials in relation to boards is a complex one, especially in large jurisdictions. Historically, the board tended to perform the functions of administration itself. With the growth in the size and complexity of school organizations, however, it became necessary to appoint professional school officials to carry out the business of the board.

Although a board will have relationships with several senior officials on its staff, and to an extent with all officials and teachers, the formal relationship between the board and the school system is in the role of its chief school officer or its chief executive officer. This individual represents the formal link between the board and the schools, in contrast to the historical situation where board members themselves constituted the formal link. In this sense, the official performs two roles in the same way that most men are at once heads of families and members of formal organizations. No one man, of course, in a large district could perform all the duties of a chief executive so that there will be delegation of authority by the top administrator in certain areas of his relationship with the board. For example, the chief administrator might delegate to his business official the direct authority for reporting to the board on budget items. In concept, nowever, the board deals formally with the school system only through the role of its chief school officer.

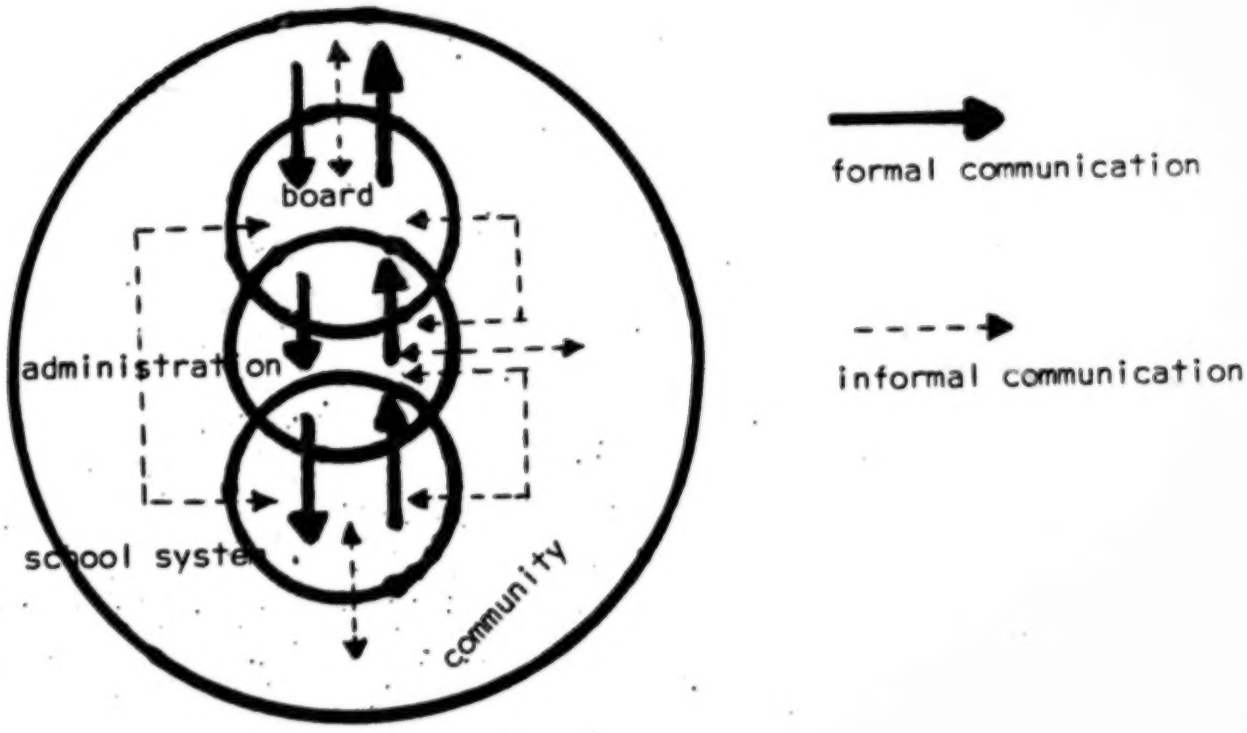


FIGURE 5. RELATIONSHIPS OF COMMUNITY, ADMINISTRATION, BOARD AND SCHOOL SYSTEM.

The administrator's role with the school board is an influential one in that he has access to information and expertise essential for school board decisions. His job is to advise the board in all areas. More than that, he initiates ideas and assumes leadership whenever possible, without in any way usurping the functions of the elected and voting board members who are finally responsible for all decisions. The official also has a function within the school system quite apart from his role with the board. In this case, he is responsible for carrying out board policies and for the creation of an organization which will permit policies to be implemented.

In further contrast to the historical situation, the lines of communication are not only from the community, through the board and its officials to the school system. There is a growing tendency for communication lines to

proceed directly from the community to the school system, from the school system to the board and from the school system to the community. These interactions tend to be informal and should be encouraged, we feel. At the same time and in a formal sense, the board separates itself from direct involvement in school affairs, using the chief school official as the formal link.

Assuming, then, that part of the chief administrator's function is to work directly with the board, it becomes essential that he develop a viable working relationship which will permit him to function in his dual role as an advisor to the board and as administrator of the school system. Obviously, a high degree of cooperation and mutual trust must be developed between the chief official, other senior officials and the trustees. As a general procedure, for instance, the trustees would expect participation from a number of officials in board decisions covering broad areas of the school program. At the same time, the chief executive has a certain authority over all of his professional subordinates, in return for which he is professionally responsible to the board for all administrative action, whether instigated by him or by his subordinates.

Again, we emphasize that when the official is working within the area of the board business, he must be directly involved with all board processes. Thus, the setting of objectives and the development of board policies is done by the board in cooperation with the officials, using their judgment and expertise. Similarly, in the case of those decisions which are the direct concern of the administrators, and in the preparation of evaluative reports, board members are involved in an advisory capacity.

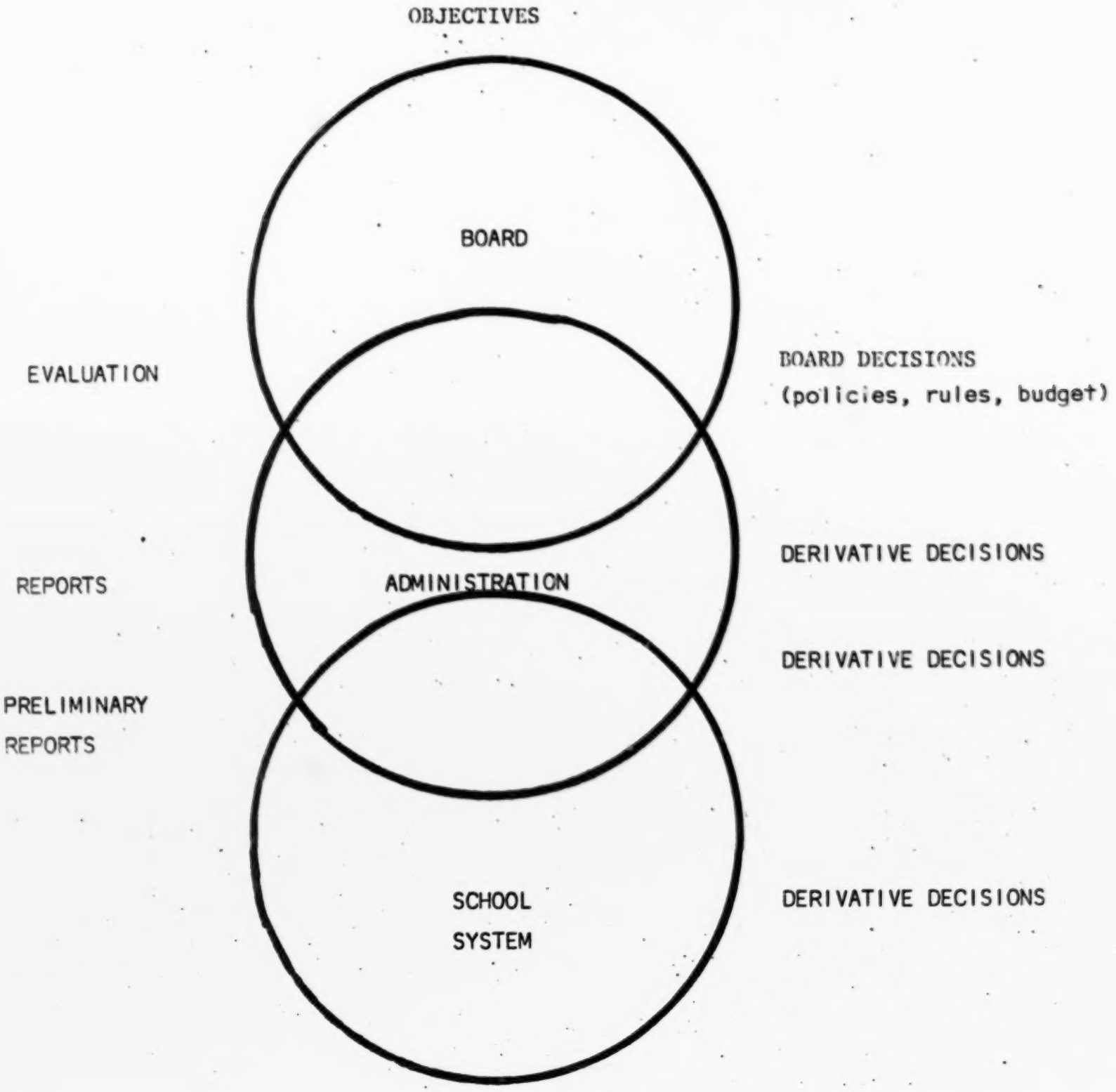


FIGURE 6. LEVELS OF DECISION MAKING

As a summary of our discussion to this point, we have considered the community, the board, and the school as separate subsystems of a larger system. Formal and informal lines of communication exist between these groupings. The formal links between the community and the board are in the form of elections, reports, tax levies and the like. The formal link between the community and

the school is through the board itself. As school organizations have become more complex, the relationship between the board and the school has been through the administrative staff, particularly through the chief school officer and his senior officials who perform a dual role with the board and with the school system.

Given this picture of the situation, we can now discuss in a systematic way the kinds of functions which should be performed by various parts of the organization. The prime function of the board is to set objectives for the system. Once the process of formulating objectives is underway, the Board and the administrative staff make certain decisions in the form of setting budgets, formulating policies and making rules. These decisions tend to be general in nature, permitting the officials to make derivative decisions of the same type which can be put into operation in educational programs. At the school system level, the same process is repeated, all within the framework of the general decisions made by the board. At the same time, all levels are involved in the evaluation of school programs. At the school system level, the administrators and the staff prepare preliminary reports of progress (or lack of progress). At the administrative level, process reports are prepared which are for the information of the board as to the state of various programs. Finally, the officials and the board together evaluate programs on the basis of these reports and the board proceeds to modify its objectives or, in cooperation with the officials, to make decisions which will either permit the continuation of programs, changes in programs or, in certain cases, the elimination of programs which do not seem to be contributing at all to the meeting of objectives.

In the following sections, we will discuss in detail some aspects of this process.

IV. Objectives

A major function of the school board is the setting of aims and objectives for the school system under its control. As representatives of the community, board members have the responsibility to translate the community's wishes with regard to education, into a statement of educational objectives giving direction to the school system.

Everyone, of course, recommends the establishment of aims and objectives for any kind of organization or for any kind of planned program. And yet, despite constant and sometimes repetitious pleas that goals be set, very few school boards in Ontario spend time specifically discussing their general direction, and fewer write down their own statements of aims and objectives.

General Objectives. It is helpful in considering the problems of stating objectives to think of two types. The first type we call general objectives. Another term to describe these would be a philosophy of education for the school board. General objectives are idealistic statements designed to focus the ideas of board members and to form a broad framework within which to work. The creation of a philosophy of education is a difficult task at best, but the effort can be extremely rewarding and revealing to a board, if it will take the time to do it.

There are various methods for developing general objectives. Board members can contribute statements of philosophy which can be discussed and integrated into a common document. Another method is to seek help from the community and from the school system itself in the form of an ad hoc citizen professional committee charged with focusing on general educational objectives for the school district..

There are other sources of assistance for the development of general objectives. At the Provincial level, the Hall-Dennis Report contains a wealth of material appropriate for the development of board philosophies.

No matter what the source of ideas for general objectives or the means for developing them, the board will not be discharging its function, in our view, if it does not create its own philosophy, appropriate for its own local situation. The Hall-Dennis Report, for instance, is not a panacea which will take care of the problems of county boards in setting general objectives. Nor are the recommendations of citizen groups or teacher groups a substitute for board effort. The board itself must translate ideas from these sources for its own use.

Here is a sample statement of a general objective:

> The school system is an instrument of society. Thus its goal must reflect the goals of the society itself; its methods must be in keeping with the principles of the society which fosters it.
>
> Broadly speaking, the goals of our society are twofold: (a) to provide to all its members the opportunity to establish and achieve individual and personal fulfillment and (b) to provide future generations its social structure, preserved in a dynamic way so that personal achievements and social objectives as yet undreamed may be achieved.

Operational Objectives. A second type of objective, related to the first, is an operational objective. The function of these is to specify in sufficient detail the general objectives so that progress can be measured. In our example of a general objective, for instance, it would be impossible to determine precisely whether the school program was really passing on to future generations "the social structure of society." It is the job of the school board to put these general philosophical directions into operation. We suggest that this has to be done not in isolation but with help from the community and from the school system. If our model is accurate at all, it

would be impossible to establish viable objectives without the participation of other component parts of the system. The school board does not exist in isolation.

Here are examples of operational objectives based on the general objective cited previously.

> Our objective is to promote and foster the growth of each individual so that he may make the most of his individual potentialities in the context of our society. Towards this end the school system shall:
>
> 1. Instruct its students in the basics of physical and mental health.
>
> 2. Teach its students to master the basic scholastic skills.
>
> 3. Provide an opportunity for the acquisition of vocational skills.
>
> 4. Acquaint all students with adventures of the intellect--art, music, theatre, literature, and the sciences.
>
> 5. Instruct its students in the fundamentals, structure and practice of basic scientific and mathematical disciplines.
>
> 6. Stimulate students to reflect on the purpose of goals of human life and to determine realistically and rationally their personal goals.

V. Board Decisions

Once general and operational objectives are established, the board has a responsibility for a series of decisions designed to meet the aims and objectives. Although we will differentiate between decisions which the board makes, decisions which officials make, and decisions which principals, teachers and students make, we should emphasize here that the same general principles apply at any level of the organization. Thus individual schools can be conceived as systems with relationships to other systems. They should establish

objectives, engage in decision-making, and make evaluations within the limits of their own boundaries.

We suggest that in the area of board decision making there are a number of operations which define the board's role.

Policy Making. A policy is a guide-line for decision making. It is based on operational objectives. For instance, an operational objective might be to instruct students in the basics of physical and mental health. Policies must be developed which will permit this to be done, policies which outline curriculum goals, teacher qualifications, standards for achievement and the like. Because board members are not professionals, it is obvious that policies are only guides, permitting within the policy framework, the exercise of expertise by professionals in the schools.

Rules. A rule is a statement of action which does not allow for discretion to be employed. In certain areas of school operation, such as salary scheduling, the board cannot allow for the exercise of judgment below the policy making level, and thus instead of a policy it creates an inflexible rule. In general, boards should avoid creating rules. If a board enjoys the confidence of the community and if it has confidence in its professional staff, rules are seldom necessary. An excess of rules results in an over-bureaucratized kind of organization in which initiative is stifled and change is difficult to bring about. A special kind of rule relative to the internal operation of the board is a by-law. These are specific statements as to board procedures, time of meetings, order of business and the like.

Budget. A third area for board decision making is the formulation and approval of the budget. In a general sense, a budget is a statement in numerical terms of the board's objectives, policies and rules. We may think of policies, rules and budgets as tools for the specification of objectives.

In this way, the decision making functions of boards are directly related to influences from the community and to influences from the school system.

VI. Administrative Decisions

Since the officials of the board are directly responsible for translating board decisions into programs within the school system, they perform a separate decision-making function related to the decision-making function of the board. On the basis of the authority contained in the objectives, policies and rules of the board, the officials construct derivative policies and rules which make sense in terms of the operation of the schools. The official has participated as a part of the board decision-making process, but he also participates in the school system decision-making process. And he operates according to the same principles which guided this process on the board level.

Thus, he attempts with the personnel in the school system to develop procedures which allow for discretion in his own subordinates, the principals and the teachers. This process, in a large system, occurs again at the individual school level where procedures allowing discretion to staff and students are the responsibility of the principal.

This kind of plan, although it appears complicated, can work very simply so long as those responsible for decision-making develop their procedures within the context of policies approved at the next higher level. It is obvious, then, that objectives, policies, rules and budgets at each level must be written down so that consistancy between the various levels can be maintained.

VII. Evaluation

A final area of board responsibility within our scheme is the function of evaluation. The whole purpose of framing objectives and policies and budgets is to provide a mechanism for determining whether progress in the school program is being made. We conceive of two aspects of evaluation from the board's point of view.

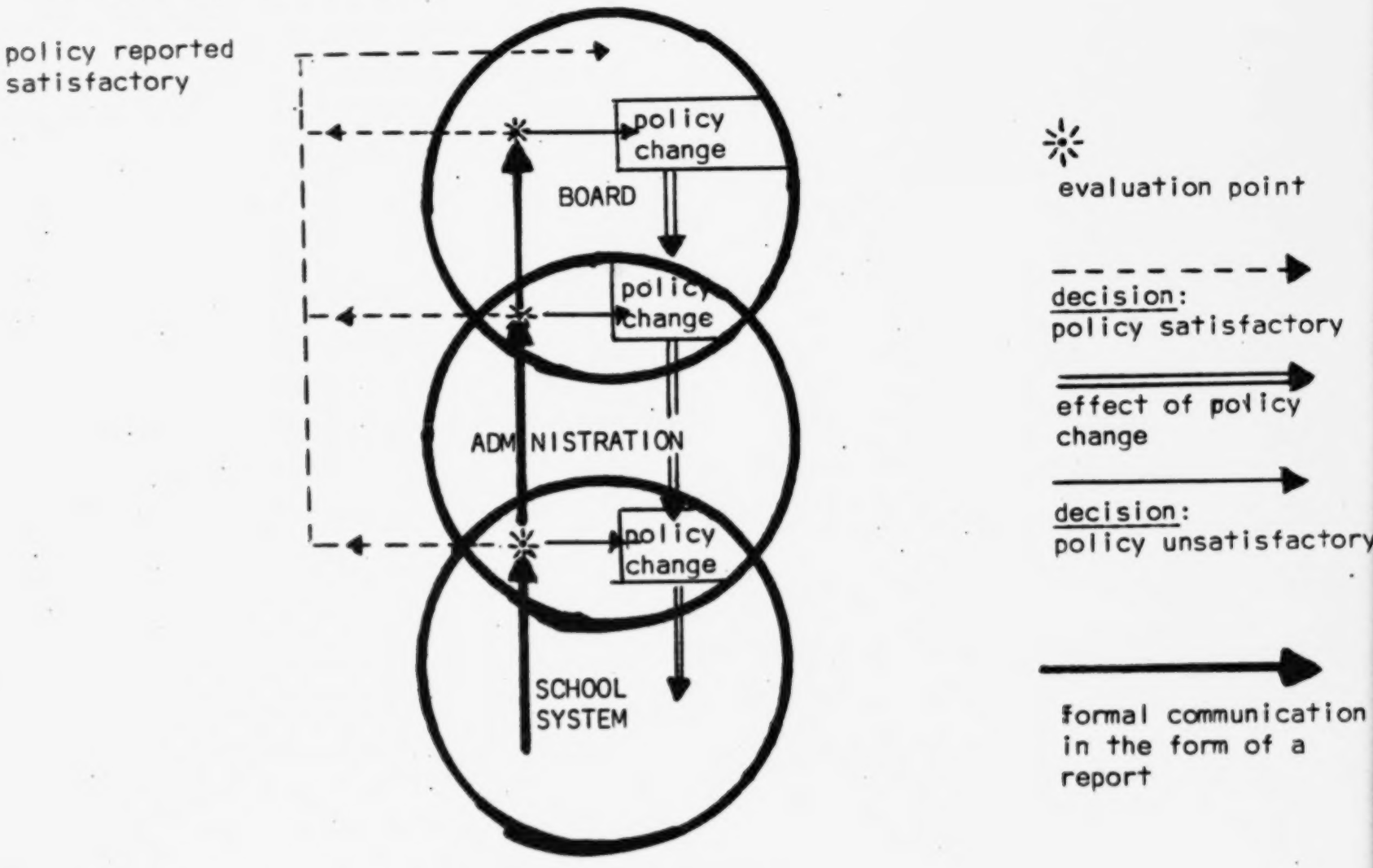


FIGURE 7. PRODUCT REPORTS AND EVALUATION

Administrative Reports. In order to receive feedback for evaluating the objectives, the board receives various kinds of reports on school programs. The preparation of these reports is the responsibility of the officials. One kind of report may be termed a process report which generally is a description of progress being made in any area. The progress

of a non-graded program might be reported. A product report, on the other hand, attempts to analyze the extent to which a program has met the objectives and policies under which it was implemented. For instance, a product report on the physical education program would report whether the objective of instructing students in the basics of physical and mental health had been achieved.

Board Evaluation. The function of the board is to examine the various reports, particularly product reports, and judge whether objectives and policies are being met. On the basis of these evaluations, the board will either suggest a change in objectives, or a change in policies and rules which will enable the objectives to be better realized.

One result of an evaluation of some school programs is that the board will see the need to change its objectives, or more likely its policies and rules, if it determines that goals are not really being met. A more common result would be that the board and the administrative staff could identify from the evaluation just where in the system problems were occurring. Often a change down the line, perhaps an adjustment in personnel or the repair of some facility, would result in improvement without the necessity for changing basic objectives or policies. It is the professional staff, however, which makes these adjustments and not the board. The board can only readjust its own objectives, policies, rules or budget.

VIII. Conclusion

What we have presented in this discussion is a general plan for school board operation. In summarizing the assumptions of this plan, we make the following points:

1. School boards do not operate in isolation. They are influenced formally and informally by forces from the community and from the school system under their control. Similarly their actions have formal and informal consequences for the community and for the schools.
2. The broad functions of school boards include the setting of objectives, the making of decisions, and the evaluation of programs in terms of the objectives.
3. Officials have a dual role. On the one hand they participate in the functions of the board. On the other hand, they function as part of the school system and in such a role they set objectives, make derivative decisions and evaluate programs all within the framework of actions taken by the board.
4. Although there are areas of overlap between parts of the system and through the different levels, the functions are different in each part and at each level. Thus, citizens cannot become directly involved in the school board functions, and school board members cannot function directly in school system decisions. Each part must exert its influence through the informal and formal links with the other parts. For example, the official in every case translates board policy into policy for the school system. The board does not do it directly.
5. Finally, the model for school board operation which we have described mandates a constant effort on the part of trustees and officials to develop a climate of mutual trust and co-operation in areas where their functions overlap. Trustees must permit officials a large measure of freedom in running

the schools. Officials must permit trustees to make the board policy decisions. At the same time, both groups exchange ideas and work together to make an effective community, board and school relationship.